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EC63-1171 Guide for Buying...Blankets

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GUIDE for BUYING

BLANKETS

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Although wool has been the traditional fiber for making blankets, at least three-fourths of the blankets made today contain no wool.

The consumer wants to know how the new blankets perform. Warmth and durability without too much weight are practical qualities most people desire in a blanket.

WARMTH

Warmth depends upon how efficient the fabric is as an insulator. Air trapped in the cloth tends to keep out cold and slows the escape of body heat. At one time the fiber used was believed to be the determining factor of warmth. "All wool" was synonymous with warmth. Construction is now known to be a factor.

The weight of a blanket is not a true indication of warmth. A lightweight fluffy blanket is usually warmer than a heavy, tightly woven, felted one. The special weave of thermal blankets combines warmth with unusual lightness.

DURABILITY

A blanket should be able to withstand wear and cleaning. Durability depends upon the quality of fiber in the yarns, the construction and finish, the amount of napping, and to some extent the blanket's size and the way it is cleaned.

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SIZE

Choose a size long enough so that the blanket can tuck in adequately at the foot of the bed, yet cover the sleeper's shoulders, and wide enough to hang down over the sides. Size affects wear. A blanket that is too short wears from constant strain. Several sizes of blankets are available, including those for extra wide or extra long beds. A popular size is 72" x 90" because it will fit either a twin or double bed.

FIBER

Federal law requires that the fiber content and percentage of each type of fiber be listed on the label. The market presently is dominated by rayon and acrylic fibers. Blends of two or more fibers are often used. Blending reduces cost and may improve performance. For example, 15 percent nylon will help control wool shrinkage.

Blankets made of man-made fibers and bound with nylon wash and dry quickly. With special finishes such as Nap Guard or Fiber Seal used on Orlon, they retain their loft and do not fuzz or pill after laundering. They are non-allergic and moth proof.

Acrylic Blankets

These may be of such trademarked fibers as Orlon, Acrilan, Creslan or Zefran as well as those labelled "Acrylic" without the registered fiber name. These have a high degree of resilience.

Rayon Blankets

These cost less, but may not look nice with use. A good rayon blanket is made of crimped new staple fiber which provides satisfactory loft and warmth. Cheap rayon blankets are often made of garnetted rayon which is reworked from waste, rags or clippings. These launder poorly and wear out quickly.

Cotton Blankets

These are popular for crib beds, children's and summer blankets. Thermal cotton blankets are lightweight. When used with a light covering they have the warmth one needs in winter, when left uncovered they are cool for summer.

Thermal blankets were first introduced for use in institutions. They proved so successful they now are available to the general public in many colors, plaids and florals.

Wool Blankets

These are still favorites in quality blankets. Wool is an excellent insulator with a natural built-in crimp that helps keep its resilience. It is flame and static resistant. New finishes permit machine washing and drying without matting and with little shrinkage. There are permanent moth proof finishes.

Textile researchers at Minnesota found that all-wool blankets ranked highest in warmth and after repeated washings retained their thickness better than any other fiber tested.

At Cornell University blankets made of different fibers were compared for their comparative insulative quality after being cleaned by various methods. Acrilan was the best insulator when new. When soaked clean Acrilan again was the best insulator and wool was next. The soak-wash method was satisfactory for all fibers in the various blankets but dry cleaning was not satisfactory for any. More research needs to be done with blankets of various fibers, construction and finishes.

CONSTRUCTION

The resilience and bulking that traps and holds air provides insulation. The weave should be close and even. Most napped blankets have some type of twill weave because this throws more filling to the surface where it can be napped, making a lofty surface without injury to the foundation cloth.

When long, strong fibers are used for the foundation, the napping process pulls up the ends, while the rest remains in the yarn. If fibers are short and weak or are loosely woven, they can be pulled out easily. These loose fibers form little balls of lint as the blanket is used.

Hold a blanket up to examine the weave as well as to see if nap is distributed evenly over the surface. Notice closeness of yarns. Pull gently on the surface to see if nap pulls out.

Bindings

The binding is an indication of quality. There are various materials but nylon wears and washes best. Acetate bindings are subject to gas fading. Several rows of lock stitching are better than chain stitching for attaching the binding.

Appearance

A wide range of colors makes it easy to select a blanket that will harmonize with other furnishings.

Electric Blankets

They permit controlled heat without weight. Wool is seldom used since an electric blanket must be washed rather than dry cleaned. Solvents used in dry cleaning damage the wire insulation.

Electric blankets are safe to use if they bear the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) seal. Overheating can develop occasionally when wires are tightly bunched in a confined area. When this happens protective devices in the wiring will break the circuit.

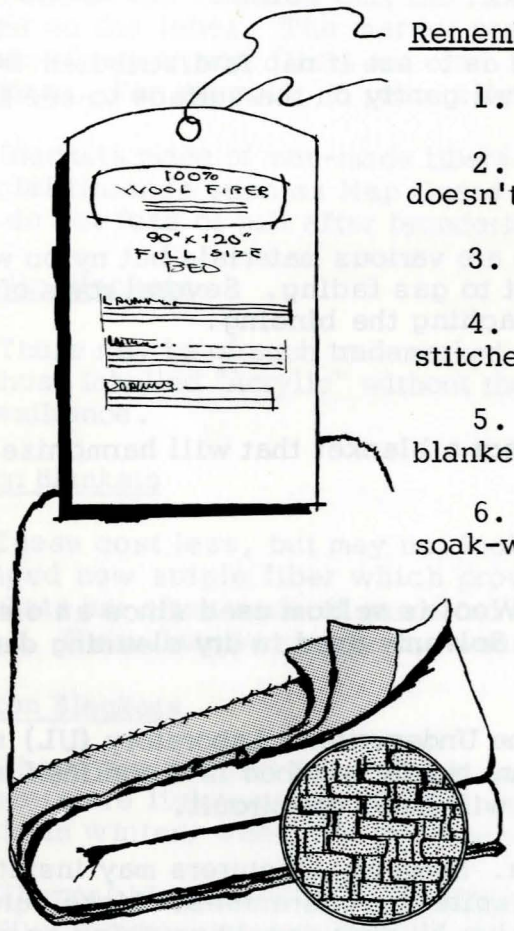
Almost all automatic blankets carry guarantees. Some manufacturers may insist that the retailer make a service charge for repair despite the guarantees. Make sure the guarantee means replacement by a new equal value blanket should anything go wrong within the specified time.

Some blankets are equipped with snaps to convert them as fitted blankets. A switch separate from the dial is convenient. An illuminated control that can be read from the pillow is desirable.

Other electric bed coverings include comforters, mattress pads and sheets. Cotton plissé or flannelette sheets are less expensive than electric blankets and serve well.

Here are some things to remember in the use and care of an electric blanket. Turn it off upon getting out of bed. Wired areas should not be tucked between the mattress and the foot board or jammed against the wall. Avoid sticking the blanket with pins or other sharp objects that might damage the electric insulation.

Objects such as magazines or books should not be laid on the blanket as it may overheat in these spots. Electric blankets are not to be used on young children or older people who are insensitive to heat.



Remember When Buying Blankets:

1. Read labels to learn fiber content.

2. Look for even, springy nap of good depth, which doesn't shed.

3. Note weave. Is it close and even?

4. See that bindings are closely woven and firmly stitched.

5. Understand guarantee made on an automatic blanket.

6. Care according to manufacturer's directions. The soak-wash method can be used for all types of blankets.